

BM3 Introduction to English Linguistics Part II

Session 1: Concepts

Who am I?

Rebecca Carroll, M.A.

Contact options:

- before & after class
- StudIP
- A 10 1-103 / phone 0441-798 3181
- Email: rebecca.carroll@uni-oldenburg.de



All information can be found on my homepage:

www.staff.uni-oldenburg.de/rebecca.carroll

Who are you?

- Name tags?
- Your picture in Stud.IP?



Organization

- **Purpose of this class**
 - Discuss questions that arise in the lecture (Vorlesung)
 - Apply what has been learned in the lecture
 - Practice and improve basic knowledge
- **General expectations**
 - Come prepared!
 - Feel free to ask questions!
 - Quiet work atmosphere (especially towards the end of class)

Organization

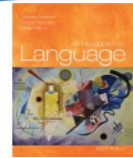
- Study linguistic terms!
good approaches:
 - flashcards
 - linguistic dictionaries (e.g. Bussmann)
 - online (Lexicon of Linguistics; U of Utrecht)
<http://www2.let.uu.nl/UiL-OTS/Lexicon/>

Organization - Literature

Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., Hyams, N. (2006). An Introduction to Language. 8th ed. Wadsworth.

Roach, P. (2000). English Phonetics & Phonology – A Practical Course. 3rd ed. Cambridge: CUP.

See *Handapparat* for further introductory books



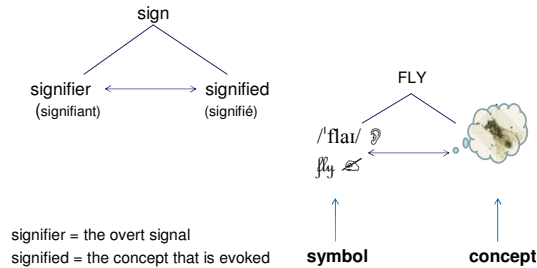
Any questions so far?

- Organizational
- Concerning the lecture
- Concerning this class

Recap: What is Linguistics?

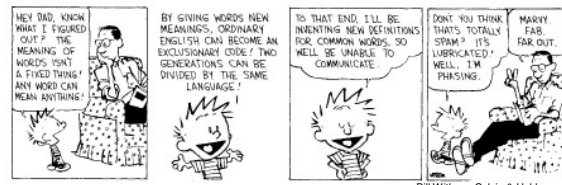
- Phonetics/ Phonology
 - Morphology
 - Syntax
 - Semantics
 - Pragmatics
 - Applied Linguistics
(Historical Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Textlinguistics, Psycholinguistics, Neurolinguistics, Computational Linguistics, ...)
- } major areas of (theoretical) linguistics

Ferdinand de Saussure (1916):
„the linguistic sign is arbitrary“



Why is Saussure's concept of language of
interest to us?

- The „label“ for concepts is arbitrary
- We understand each other due to conventions in labeling



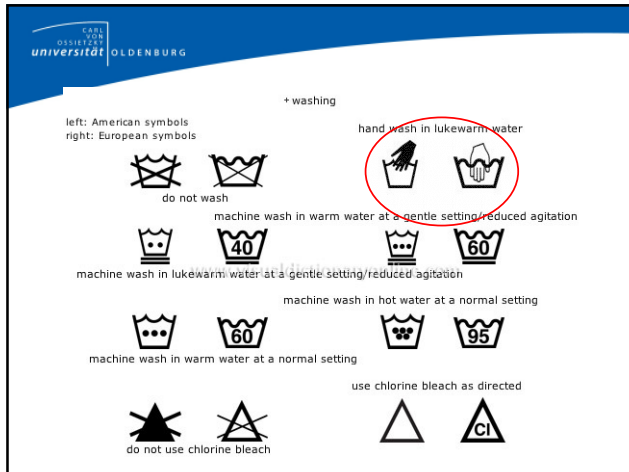
Semiotics – the study of signs

- What type of signs do you know?
- How can they be defined?

Symbol Arbitrary sign; conventional

Icon Meaning is clearly identifiable
from the pictogram

CONSUMER GUIDE TO CARE SYMBOLS									
	Machine wash cycles	normal	permanent press	delicate/gentle	hand wash	Washing temperature (degrees Celsius)	do not bleach	do not dry	do not iron
	any bleach when needed	only non-chlorine bleach when needed				Water temperature (degrees Celsius)	do not dry	do not iron	do not steam
	Tumble dry	normal	permanent press	delicate/gentle	line dry	any bleach when needed	do not dry	do not iron	do not steam
	Iron-on dry	low	medium	high	no heat	any additional symbols	do not dry	do not iron	do not steam
	Exclusively dryclean	requires modified drycleaning				any additional symbols	do not dry	do not iron	do not steam



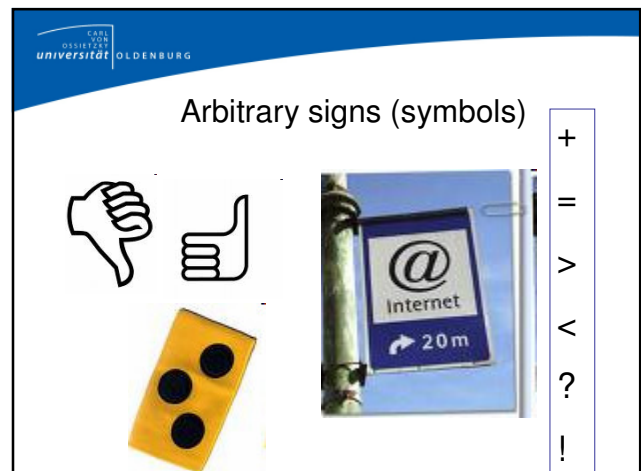
CARL
OSTERTAGS
universität OLDENBURG

Your turn!

Although sounds and meanings of most words in all languages are arbitrarily related, there are some communication systems in which the „sign“ unambiguously reveal their „meaning“.

a. Describe (or draw) 5 different signs that directly show what they mean.
Example: a road sign indicating an S curve.

b. Describe any other communication system that, like language, consists of arbitrary symbols.
Ex.: traffic light, where red means stop and green means go.



Your turn!

A small set of words in languages are onomatopoeic.
That is, their sounds „imitate“ what they refer to.

- Find such onomatopoeic words.
- Are they truly non-arbitrary?

Your turn!

Consider these 2 statements:

I learned a new word today.

I learned a new sentence today.

- ⇒ Do you think these 2 statements are equally probable?
- ⇒ Why (not)?

- *I learned a new word today.*

⇒ quite probable; (learned) addition to mental lexicon

- *I learned a new sentence today.*

⇒ not very likely. Most sentences are not learned or
memorized but rather freely constructed.
Exceptions: slogans, proverbs, ...

Your turn!

A wolf is able to express subtle gradations of emotion by
different positions of the ears, the lips, and the tail. There
are 11 postures of the tail that express such emotions as
self-confidence, confident threat, lack of tension, uncertain threat,
depression, defensiveness, active submission, and complete
submission.

This system seems to be complex. Suppose that there
were a thousand different emotions that the wolf could
express in this way.

Would you then say a wolf had a language similar to a
human's? Why (not)?

Phonetics – The Art of Articulation

Spoken language consists of individual sounds.

- How do we produce these sounds?
- What organs are involved?